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## ABSTRACT

The continued existence and value of teacher aides in school districts throughout America is dependent on the successful manipulation of a number of variables. These are quite divergent and vary from school district to school district and often within individual schools. The successful operation of each teacher aide program depends on the development, implementation, and utilization of an adequate preservice and inservice educational program. Each training aspect of preservice and inservice training programs should be based upon the needs of aides, teachers, and administrators. To solicit information pertaining to the problems and issues confronting teacher aides, 50 aides in a paraprofessional training program (Career Opportunity Program) at Indiana University at South Bend were contacted and asked to identify their most pressing concerns. They indicated that they desired clarification of their roles and duties, additional training, and they indicated a need for the development and implementation of an adequate preservice and inservice educational program. The development of preservice and inservice training programs for teacher aides is valuable in that interaction and cooperative efforts on the part of each aide, teacher, and administrator can be strengthened. A typical program should provide opportunities for each of these groups to work as a team in facilitating learning for all students. (DMT)

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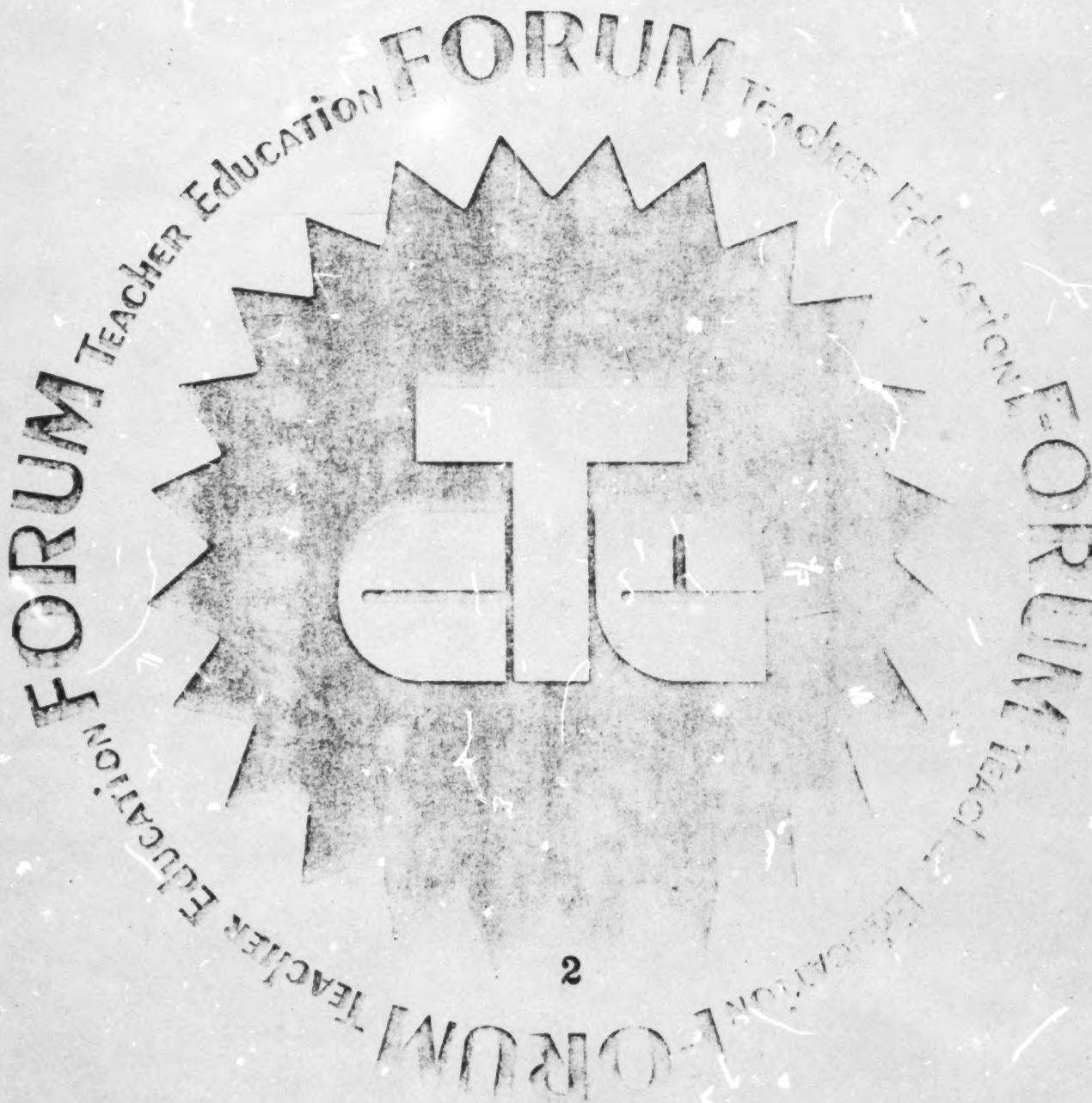
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PRESERVICE AND INSERVICE EDUCATION:

A CASE FOR TEACHER AIDES

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The frustrations and misunderstandings expressed by teacher aides, teachers and administrators regarding the utilization of teacher aides are apparent in a number of school districts. If these frustrations and misunderstandings are to cease, an increased amount of preservice and inservice education has to take place. Teacher aides, as members of the paraprofession, must be given the skills and training necessary to effectively assist in facilitating learning. The rapid expansion and development of the teacher aide paraprofession has increasingly influenced the roles of instruction in our educational system. Preservice and inservice education has to be adequately developed and implemented according to the needs and entry levels of the teacher aides. Changing the format as dictated by the achievement and progress of the aides might also be valuable in planning training programs.

#### RATIONALE FOR PRESERVICE/INSERVICE EDUCATION

One of the major functions of professional schools of education in this country is to prepare teachers to work in varied situations, with a minimum number of difficulties (Pounds and Bryner, 1973). Likewise, educators through preservice and inservice education should address themselves to the training of teacher aides, so that they will be adequately prepared for their educational roles. Training for the teacher aides should also encompass a preservice and inservice program designed to enhance their awareness, insight, knowledge, skill, and understanding of the teaching-learning process.

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Preservice education, which includes all academic and professional work completed prior to employment in an educational setting, may include college courses, seminars, workshops, and discussions, where the content is specifically designed and oriented to the needs of teacher aides. In many colleges and universities, course work is counted toward associate and bachelor's degrees.

Inservice education is generally concerned with professional and academic growth following employment in an educational setting. This phase of education should be concerned with specific problems and issues that relate to the operations of the teacher aides. Inservice educators, as with those in the preservice facet, might also design specific courses, seminars and workshops to impart information pertaining to aides. Training can take place on college campuses or in individual school districts. Whether teacher aides can achieve the competencies necessary for obtaining and maintaining employment in the future will depend largely upon the caliber of skills and techniques acquired in their training.

The idea of preservice and inservice education is valuable in that participation and cooperative ventures on the part of the aides, teachers and administrators can be developed. Providing all concerned individuals with a basic understanding of the operations of teacher aides through preservice and inservice education will further enhance the probability that a lasting and educationally sound relationship will be finalized. In essence, key issues pertaining to the creation of preservice and inservice programs can be summarized in two broad areas: 1) Possible concerns of preservice and inservice education; and 2) Roles of the aides, teachers and administrators in the formulation of preservice and inservice education.

### PROBLEMS/ISSUES CONFRONTING TEACHER AIDES

To a great degree, a number of problems occur when role perceptions regarding the aides' duties and responsibilities are defined differently by teacher aides, teachers and administrators.

To solicit information pertaining to the problems and issues confronting teacher aides, a sample of 50 aides in a paraprofessional training program (Career Opportunity Program) at Indiana University at South Bend were contacted and asked to identify their most pressing concerns. The aides indicated that they desired a clarification of their roles and the duties they were expected to perform in the classroom. Training in the paraprofession was also emphasized by a significant number of persons. A significant majority of the sample indicated that there was a need to develop and implement an adequate preservice and inservice educational program. An educationally sound program would facilitate an understanding of the duties and responsibilities of the aides (Shipp, 1966). Furthermore, the data gathered tend to substantiate the contention that the aide, teacher, and administrator play major parts in the development of preservice and inservice educational programs.

### TRAINING THE AIDES

The training of teacher aides requires a point of view contingent upon their needs and academic experiences, in addition to their acquisition of knowledge about duties, responsibilities, techniques, and skills as they pertain to their job. Several assumptions are evident in the planning and implementation of preservice and inservice training programs. First, the need for concise and clear definitions of duties and responsibilities upon entrance into the teacher aides paraprofession is important. Second, interlocking theories and practices as they relate to teacher aides will

enhance the probability that each aide will have an awareness of what is expected of him/her. The third assumption pertains to the utilization of preservice and inservice training in fostering social, academic, professional growth on the part of the aides, teachers, and administrators.

#### Delineation of Duties

The establishment of workable relationships and the delineation of duties and responsibilities become a single framework for all functional experiences associated with roles of each aide, teacher and administrator with respect to preservice and inservice education. With duties and responsibilities varying from district to district and in many instances differing within individual districts and schools, complete agreement on specific duties should not be sought. The need for a clear and concise set of duties and responsibilities is apparent if the aides are to perform in a capacity for which they are trained. The derivation of duties and responsibilities is contingent upon a number of variables, such as types of instructional programs, grade levels, achievement of the students, prior experiences for the aides, and the school's orientation toward learning. For the most part, a model from which appropriate functions and alternatives can be derived will be beneficial to concerned individuals. The delineation of possible duties and responsibilities to be performed by the aides is, therefore, foremost in developing and implementing preservice and inservice education (Borstad and Dewar, 1970). Duties and responsibilities should be identified and delineated by administrators, teachers and teacher aides. Each group's delineations should be based upon its own perceptions of what the teacher aide's job entails.

#### Theories and Practices

Theories can be meshed with practices through the use of well designed and organized field experience programs. Teacher aides should spend time

in practical situations following the acquisition of selected theories and principles related to their profession. Practical field situations offer the aides opportunities to experience a diverse number of activities. Like those items previously discussed, practical field experiences should facilitate a smooth relationship among teacher aides, teachers and administrators. Practical field experience will also serve as a reference point for those individuals who need input relative to making decisions about further academic training and/or teacher certification. A well developed and articulated program will provide the teacher aides opportunities to utilize what has been acquired in seminars, conferences, workshops and specifically designed college courses. Field experiences could also provide validation of career choices and promotion of self direction for each teacher aide (Peterson, Calvin and Yutzy, 1973).

#### An Approach to Preservice/Inservice Education

Considerable evidence can be summoned to support the thesis that preservice and inservice education can facilitate an understanding of the teacher aide concept. It would be somewhat difficult to identify every type of preservice and inservice educational programs for teacher aides.

For the teacher aide concept to succeed, and survive, a preservice and inservice program has to evolve in which the aides are introduced to skills and practices necessary to function in their assigned roles.

Activities involving the aides, teachers and administrators should be designed to acquaint each group with the organizational structure of the school district and the aides' position in the chain of authority. Another important facet relates to expectation and performance of acceptable duties by the aides. In introductory preservice and inservice sessions, aides should be made aware of the criteria and procedures of

evaluation. Evaluation should be both short- and long-range. Administrators, teachers and teacher aides should participate in developing procedures whereby the aides can be evaluated. Evaluation is also necessary to plan the types of preservice and inservice programs needed to facilitate the aides' professional development.

#### Typical Preservice/Inservice Sessions

The proposed training plans might differ among school districts; however, they do provide a framework from which preservice and inservice training might evolve. Seminars, conferences, workshops, and specifically designed college courses can be utilized in all phases of training. Simulation and psychodrama techniques may also be used as the vehicle whereby teacher aides' principles are introduced and discussed.

A typical preservice or inservice educational program should provide opportunities whereby each group can work as a team in facilitating learning for all students. Depending on the specific needs of a school district, typical preservice and inservice educational sessions for teachers, administrators and teacher aides could include the following group sessions:

Group I - Teachers and Administrators: Specific duties and responsibilities for aides can be developed and analyzed. Perceived duties and responsibilities should focus around the following: grade levels, subjects, schools, aide's academic training, experiences, and specific duties of the target population. Discussions should take place in small groups.

Group II - Teacher Aides: Duties and responsibilities based upon the aides' perceptions will be delineated. The teaching-learning process should be used as a framework from which the derivation of duties and responsibilities evolve. Aides should be encouraged to indicate their perceived weaknesses, as well as other concerns related to the teacher

aide concept. Individual teacher aides should first define their perceived duties and responsibilities followed by small group interaction.

Group III - Teachers, Administrators and Teacher Aides: One group should be formed consisting of the aides, teachers and administrators. Perceived duties and responsibilities will be discussed. Group interaction should focus on discrepancies, if any, among the three components of the group. School policies and regulations pertaining to the aides can also be discussed in this group. The formulation of a job description for the aides will be the final product. Some possible techniques to be utilized in the classroom may also be discussed.

Group IV - Teachers, Administrators and Teacher Aides: Long-range goals pertaining to perceived needs, preservice and inservice education will be identified. The group might also focus on an instrument for evaluating the aides. Small group discussions may be used.

Preservice and inservice education for teacher aides should always capitalize on the experiences of school administrators, teacher aides and other resource persons in the school district. An outside observer or facilitator may also prove to be helpful in most instances.

The need to develop an understanding and awareness of the teacher aide paraprofession should be foremost in any training program. Training sessions should further be designed to provide opportunities for social and professional interaction for teacher aides, administrators and teachers.

Another necessity for the effective utilization of teacher aides is the development of interpersonal relationships. Teacher aides, administrators and teachers should be introduced to skills which might facilitate cooperation, empathic understanding, trust, confrontation and direct and indirect feedback.

### SUMMARY

The continued existence and value of teacher aides in school districts throughout America is dependent on the successful manipulation of a number of variables. These variables are quite divergent and vary from school district to school district, and often within individual schools. The successful operation of each teacher aide's program depends on the development, implementation and utilization of an adequate pre-service and inservice educational program. The design of each preservice and inservice session should be developed according to carefully delineated needs. Preservice and inservice training programs for teacher aides can further enhance their professional and academic growth. Each training aspect of preservice and inservice training programs should be based upon the needs of the aides, teachers and administrators.

The development of preservice and inservice training programs for teacher aides is valuable in that interaction and cooperative efforts on the part of each of the aides, teachers, and administrators can be strengthened. Providing each group with principles and concepts on the utilization of teacher aides through preservice and inservice training will enhance the chances that a durable and educationally sound relationship will exist permanently in the teaching process.

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